

****ATTENTION****

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Regional Activities

The Nongame Wildlife Program extends throughout the State of Washington to each of the Game Department's six regional offices. The Regional Nongame Biologists provide the data system with information and at the same time are able to work with the specific needs of their regions. The following are some regional nongame activities:

Inventory and Protection of Natural Areas

The soil, flora, climate and several other elements combine to create wildlife habitat. When a major habitat disturbance occurs in an ecologically sensitive area, it will often fail to support the wildlife which originally occurred in the area. Surveys and inventories of natural areas, such as riparian, wetland and sagebrush ecosystems, will be designed and conducted. The information collected will be used to identify sensitive areas warranting protection.

To date, the Nongame Program has acquired nine natural areas including bald eagle wintering habitat on the Skagit River and important seabird nesting grounds on Protection Island.

Urban Ecology

During the past few years, urban wildlife ecology has become recognized as an important facet of urban planning. The Urban Nongame Biologist works with county planners and conservation groups identifying vital wildlife habitats and facilitating their protection. In addition, the Urban Wildlife Biologist develops educational and interpretive programs designed to enhance public awareness and enjoyment of wildlife.



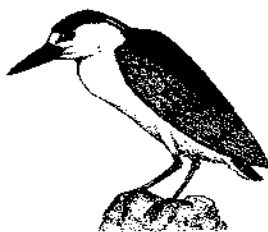
Raptor Studies and Management

Nongame biologists are concentrating on the following raptors: bald and golden eagles, ferruginous hawks, prairie and peregrine falcons, goshawks, and spotted owls. Ongoing activities include locating wintering and nesting sites, monitoring activity at the sites, and protecting these species from the impacts of human disturbance.

Cavity Nesting Species

Screech owls, wood ducks, purple martins, mountain and western bluebirds, and kestrels are among the species found in Washington which nest in tree cavities. Protection and management of snags for these species is the most effective method of increasing their populations.

Nongame biologists work with other land resource management agencies to implement snag management policies essential for the conservation of cavity nesting species.



Colonial Nesting Species

Several areas of Washington contain large populations of colonial nesting species. Caspian and Forster's terns, great blue herons, black-crowned night herons, and several species of seabirds are among the colonial nesters of special interest. Surveys are conducted to determine the location and status of their sensitive nesting areas. Information thus collected will facilitate design of management strategies for protection of these species' breeding sites.

Research Projects

In addition to the data system and regional activities, the Nongame Wildlife Program also conducts research and has supported numerous university studies. Species selected for research may be federally listed as threatened or endangered, or considered rare in Washington. Species whose life histories have been insufficiently studied also merit research.

Early research projects focused upon birds and mammals commonly found in Washington's coastal zones. The preliminary studies included preparation of species fact sheets and determination of potentially threatened wildlife in coastal zones. Subsequent research produced more detailed studies of sensitive species and included management recommendations.

The bald eagle and peregrine falcon are federally listed as threatened and endangered, respectively. During the past few years, biologists intensively studied these species to determine their food habits, distribution, productivity and relative abundance in Washington. Some questions still remain to be answered. Tasks, such as locating bald eagle colonial roosts and conducting midwinter surveys of bald eagles will be shifted to regional biologists.

Research on the spotted owl and its relationship to old growth forest is another project nongame biologists are undertaking. Studies of this species distribution, relative abundance, and essential habitat requirements will aid in future management plans.

Several other nongame species need further research. Available information shows that some species may be quite vulnerable, yet there is insufficient data to make informed decisions about their management. These species include the Larch Mountain salamander, the northern bog lemming, the ringnecked snake, and others.



Future of the Program

Analysis of available data will indicate potentially important wildlife habitats. Field studies for these areas will clarify protection and management needs. This is an objective approach which emphasizes the most important areas and which should limit conflict between development and conservation interests. Coordination of nongame species and habitat management between all land management agencies is a major ongoing activity as well.

The final responsibility for the protection of our wildlife rests with the people of Washington. Wildlife conservation efforts must rely heavily upon lay public and professional involvement to continue. A great deal of work has already been done, and with support from the people of the State of Washington, we can preserve our wildlife and the habitat it needs to survive.

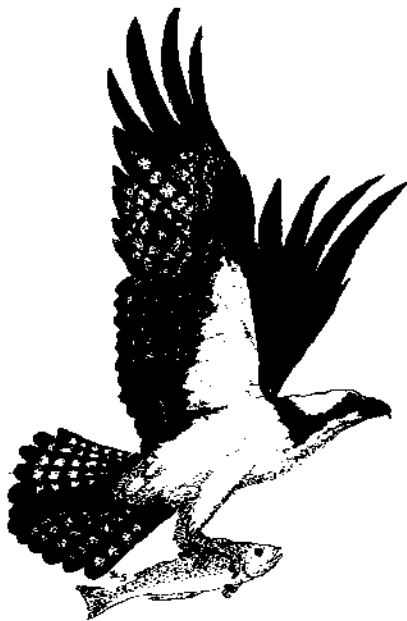
Concerned Washington Residents Can Help By:

- *Purchasing personalized license plates through the Department of Licensing.
- *Establishing management agreements or conservation easements with the assistance of the Nongame Wildlife Program or private conservation groups for protection of wildlife habitat.
- *Submitting observations of sensitive species and participating in surveys and censuses, such as the annual midwinter bald eagle survey (animal identification skills required).
- *Contacting the nongame biologist in your region or a member of the advisory council if you have specific suggestions or concerns.
- *Donating funds or property to the Citizens Wildlife Heritage Program.



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Washington Department of Game Nongame Wildlife Program



Mission-

To preserve, protect, perpetuate and enhance the nongame wildlife and habitat resources of the state for the benefit of present and future generations.

Nongame Wildlife Program Plan

The Data System

In 1978 the Nongame Wildlife Program entered a cooperative agreement with the Washington Natural Heritage Program (WNHP), a program established to identify and seek protection for ecologically significant features of Washington, to establish and maintain a data storage and retrieval system and to inventory Washington species. Two years of diligent work by nongame personnel and Young Adult Conservation Corps research assistants produced a working data base.

The Nongame Wildlife Program collects and stores information on all Washington wildlife with an emphasis on special wildlife. Special wildlife are those species that are rare, threatened, endangered, or sensitive with specialized ecological requirements which render them vulnerable to environmental disturbance. Species which concentrate in particular areas during the year and those with restricted ranges in Washington are considered vulnerable. Specific locational information on extremely sensitive species is not generally distributed.

Information for the data system comes from many sources, i.e., professionals working in state and federal agencies, people involved in research at colleges and universities, and the general public. Data system staff search the available literature and inventory museum collections for additional data.

Data collection is a continuous process; new information is constantly sought. The analysis of information will identify geographic areas and species warranting protection.

The data system lends itself to a broad range of use. Regional nongame biologists use the data system to develop and support conservation activities. State and federal agencies, developers, private consulting firms, and other interests request data for environmental impact assessment. Faculty and students use the data system as a starting point for research projects. Conservationists and other individuals also request information. The Nongame Wildlife Program has experienced a steady increase in the number and variety of information requests received.

A Need Identified

Washington is gifted with natural resources encompassing a large variety of environments. Dense coastal rain forest, arid grasslands, rugged seashores, and extensive inland waters comprise only part of Washington's diverse biotic communities. This diverse and rich habitat supports hundreds of wildlife species.

Washington, however, is the smallest and second most populated state in the west. Consequently, threats to wildlife from man's activities and land use practices are more intense than in most other western states.

The discussion above evinces the need to identify and inventory the wildlife and land resources of Washington. Information generated should be considered in land use decisions for responsible preservation and management of wildlife species and habitats.



History

Wildlife management was placed in state jurisdiction from previous county control in 1933. The Department of Game became the administrator of wildlife management which concentrated primarily on game species.

Increased environmental awareness during the 1960's identified the need to protect and manage nonhunted wildlife in Washington. In 1971 the Washington Department of Game submitted a formal budget request from the General Fund, which included a Nongame Wildlife Program. Although the program outlined was well supported, the legislature was reluctant to fund another program. After analyzing several funding methods, the sale of personalized license plates was selected as the most viable; and the

subsequent referendum was well supported by the voters. Sales of personalized license plates began in January, 1974. The Nongame Wildlife Program receives no funding through general tax revenues or hunting license fees.

The initial revenue generated by license plate sales was used to support graduate level research on nongame species and development of management recommendations. The Nongame Wildlife Program now employs 14 wildlife biologists, one for each of the state's six administrative regions; two research biologists, one examining wildlife in urban areas, one identifying critical habitats for sensitive species for possible protection, and four involved in inventory, data storage, retrieval, and interpretation.

In 1979, the Director established a Nongame Advisory Council to advise the department from the perspective of both the scientific and lay publics on the preservation and enhancement of the state's nongame wildlife and habitat resources.

The main functions of the council are to make recommendations regarding development and implementation of the Nongame strategic and operational plans and periodically evaluate program progress.

The Nongame Plan

In 1980 a comprehensive nongame plan was written as a basis for all program activities. Three major goals were recognized, and a detailed list of strategies was developed for each goal. Program goals included the following:

- *Identify nongame species and acquire a knowledge of their numbers, distribution, habitat requirements, natural history and ecology.
- *Preserve natural habitats and native nongame wildlife species at self-sustaining levels and thereby perpetuate the diversity of wildlife in the state.
- *Provide for the public education and enjoyment of nongame wildlife while ensuring minimal impact on the resources.

All projects are designed to implement and further promote these three basic goals.